

- (1) Nothingness (Level/Abode)
- (2) Peak of Cyclic Existence (Level/Abode)

The Desire Realm and the eight divisions of the Form and Formless Realms constitute the nine levels.

The four divisions of the Form Realm have further subdivisions, namely the Seventeen Abodes of the Form Realm:

The First Concentration has three subdivisions:

- 1. Brahma Type (Abode)
- 2. In Front of Brahma (Abode)
- 3. Great Brahma (Abode)

The Second Concentration has three subdivisions:

- 4. Little Light (Abode)
- 5. Limitless Light (Abode)
- 6. Bright Light (Abode)

The Third Concentration has three subdivisions:

- 7. Little Virtue (Abode)
- 8. Limitless Virtue (Abode)
- 9. Vast Virtue (Abode)

The Fourth Concentration has eight subdivisions:

- 10. Cloudless (Abode)
- 11. Born from Merit (Abode)
- 12. Great Fruit (Abode)
- 13. Not Great (Abode)
- 14. Without Pain (Abode)
- 15. Excellent Appearance (Abode)
- 16. Great Perception (Abode)
- 17. Not Low (Abode)

The Formless Realm has no further subdivisions.

Of the eight meditative absorptions it is easiest to attain the first concentration. Each subsequent concentration and absorption is increasingly more difficult to attain which means that the cultivation of the fourth formless absorption (peak of cyclic existence) is most difficult.

Furthermore, the cultivation of the meditative absorptions that are easier to attain must precede the cultivation of the meditative absorptions that are more difficult to attain.

Therefore, the cultivation of the second concentration must be preceded by the cultivation of the first concentration, the cultivation of the third concentration must be preceded by the cultivation of the first and second concentration, the cultivation of the fourth concentration must be preceded by the cultivation of the first, second, and third concentration, the cultivation of the first formless absorption (Limitless Space) must be preceded by the cultivation of the four concentrations, and so forth.

The first concentration is cultivated after attaining calm abiding and special insight. It is an extremely concentrated state of mind that is also able to engage in very effective analytical meditation.

Moreover, when meditators have cultivated the first concentration, coarse afflictions pertaining to the Desire Realm cannot arise in their continua as long as the first concentration does not degenerate. The afflictions that arise in their continua are subtle afflictions that pertain to the Desire Realm (e.g. the Desire Realm awareness that grasps at a truly existent self), and subtle and coarse afflictions that pertain to the first concentration.

Likewise, when meditators have cultivated the second concentration, coarse afflictions of both the Desire Realm and the First Concentration (Abode) cannot arise in their continua as long as the second concentration does not degenerate. The afflictions that arise in their continua are subtle

afflictions that pertain to the Desire Realm and the First Concentration (Abode), and coarse and subtle afflictions that pertain to the Second Concentration (Abode).

The same applies to the remaining two concentrations and the four formless absorptions. Therefore, when meditators have attained the fourth formless absorption (peak of cyclic existence), coarse afflictions that pertain to the Four Concentrations and the first three Formless Absorptions cannot arise in their continua as long as the fourth formless absorption does not degenerate. The afflictions that arise in their continua are the subtle afflictions of the Four Concentrations and the first three Formless Absorptions as well as the coarse and subtle afflictions of the fourth formless absorption.

Returning to Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *General Meaning*, the text proceeds by explaining the nature (meaning) of each of the five sublime eyes:

2. The nature (meaning) of each of the five sublime eyes

The nature of the physical sublime eye is: that which is thoroughly distinguished by being posited as a sublime eye based on the capacity to directly perceive subtle and coarse form within the three-thousand-fold [world system], [at a distance ranging] from [at least] one hundred yojanas.

The nature of the celestial sublime eye is: that which is thoroughly distinguished by being posited [as a sublime eye] based on directly realizing death-transference and rebirth of sentient beings within the three-thousand-fold [world system of our universe], [at a distance ranging] from [at least] one hundred yojanas.

The nature of the sublime eye of wisdom is: that which is concomitant with mental stabilization and wisdom, and is thoroughly distinguished by being posited as a sublime eye based on directly realizing its objects, subtle and coarse selflessness.

The nature of the sublime eye of Dharma is: that which is concomitant with mental stabilization and wisdom, and is thoroughly distinguished by being posited [as a sublime eye] based on directly realizing its objects, Arya beings of sharp and weak faculty.

The nature of the sublime eye of Buddha is: a final, primordial wisdom that directly and simultaneously realizes the two truths.

- Since some scriptures describe physical sublime eyes to be eye sense powers, someone asserts: "A physical sublime eye is an eye sense power."

This assertion is not correct because proponents of the Sautantrika, Chittamatra, and Madhyamika tenet hold that even though an eye consciousness perceives form, an eye sense power cannot perceive form.

- Another person asserts: "The first two sublime eyes (the physical sublime eye and the celestial sublime eye are sense consciousnesses."

This assertion is also not correct because since sublime eyes are explained to depend on concentrations as their mental basis, they must be mental consciousnesses.

3. The sameness of levels

This subtopic slightly digresses from the topic of the five sublime eyes in that it discusses sense consciousnesses in the continua of those who attained any of the four concentrations.

Here levels refer to the nine levels: the Desire Realm level, the four Form Realm levels, and the four Formless Realm levels.

With regard to a person who has attained any of the four concentrations and who apprehends an object with a sense consciousness, Panchen Sonam Drakpa examines whether the following four phenomena are of the same level or of different levels. The four phenomena are:

- (1) The physical basis that observes an object,
- (2) The sense power,
- (3) The awareness, and
- (4) The object of the awarenesses

